

Case Study 1

Think about the ways in which the tools you have on hand can lead you to the information your patron needs. As an example, a local reporter wants to know the amount of land in your county that is owned by the State of Idaho.

You begin by choosing the *Idaho Blue Book* as a good place to locate general information on Idaho. The index of the *Blue Book*, under "Land Ownership," refers you to a page listing both the land ownership and the percent of land ownership, statewide, broken down by type of owner (federal, state, private, etc.) but **not** by county. However, a note at the bottom of the page tells you the source of the information: the Idaho Department of Commerce's publication, *County Profiles of Idaho*. You already know that many state agencies publish on the Web. Since this is a state publication, your first step should be to check the Department of Commerce's web site to see if they have posted it there.

Checking the menu on the left side of Commerce's home page, <http://commerce.idaho.gov/>, you click on "Communities," and then on "Profiles." Click on "View County Profiles," and you will see a list of all 44 counties, from which you can choose the one you need. The profile for your county will give you a brief overview of its land ownership. Alternately, at the bottom of the list of counties, you will find two additional items, one of which is a "Summary of Land Ownership." The summary will provide, in addition to other county land ownership information, a detailed description of what government agencies own land in each county.

It is worth noting that the Department of Commerce distributes a print copy of *County Profiles* at no charge to any library that requests it. However, in comparison to its print counterpart, the online version may contain more current information, and it definitely includes information (such as the "Summary of Land Ownership") not found in the print source.

Case Study 2

An older person remembers the collapse of a suspension bridge, which he thinks occurred in Washington State in the late 1930s. He wants to read about this bridge, but doesn't remember any other information about it.

There are several ways you can search for information. Start with the facts that you have. A quick check of the *Encyclopedia Americana* for suspension bridges refers you to the broader subject "Bridge." The section on "Modern Bridges" includes information on suspension bridges with a subsection on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge Failure in 1940. This gives a brief summary of the facts.

You may decide to begin your search with other sources than an encyclopedia, or perhaps your encyclopedia doesn't have any information on this bridge. Undoubtedly there have been articles written about this event and possibly books too. What sources can you use to identify keywords and subject headings that will help you find information?

A search of WorldCat (LiLi-U) will give you a list of books and other items on this topic. What keywords should you use to find out what is available? Using the little information you have, you might try a keyword search for "suspension bridge Washington." This search will yield more than 80 items and most of these are books. Scrolling through the ten items on the first screen will show you that this was the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and the failure occurred on Nov. 7, 1940. Looking at two or three of the records will give you some subject headings (descriptors) to use for a more defined search. Two promising subject headings are: "Bridge failures - Washington (State)" and "Tacoma Narrows Bridge (Tacoma, Wash.)." A subject search for Tacoma Narrows Bridge, limited to books, will reveal around 50 titles. Scanning these titles will also tell you that the bridge was nicknamed "Gallopertie."

With the additional information you now have, you can check your own catalog for books on the subject as well as helping your patron identify books in WorldCat (LiLi-U) that he might want to borrow through interlibrary loan. Many of the titles in WorldCat (LiLi-U) appear to be technical reports and may be too detailed if your patron is only looking for general information. If you have not previously determined the level of information desired, this is the time to clarify what is needed.

Your next step might be to look for articles on this subject. Depending on what you have in your collection, you can approach this in two ways. If you have *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* going back 60 years or more, you can search for articles published at the time of this event. You can also look for more recent articles by going to the LiLI periodical databases. Be sure to check with your patron to find out if he wants recent articles that might discuss this event or articles that were published at the time it occurred. The latter may need to be ordered through interlibrary loan unless your collection contains these older periodicals.

A search in *ProQuest's Central* database yields more than 1,000 articles using "Tacoma Narrows Bridge" as keywords and expanding the search to full text of articles. Many of these articles

refer to a new bridge, but several also have information about the collapse of the first bridge. If you want to be more specific, you can use other terms to narrow your search.

Searching the Internet is another logical step. A search in Google, <www.google.com> for <"Tacoma Narrows Bridge" collapse > pulls up several good sites including pictures.

With some searches, using a variety of synonyms can be helpful. While that may not be as necessary in this particular search, note that as you progress through the sources you will come across several descriptive words for this event: collapse, failure, and disaster are a few that could be used for a narrower search.

By mentally and physically reviewing all your resources in this manner, your patron should leave the library a satisfied customer, regardless of the size of your collection.